Women's Health Issue! *Inside:* Menopause and Estrogen p.5 Menstrual Extraction p.7
Transgendered and Bi p. 9—Body Image p. 11 (Un) Sanitary Napkins p. 13 *Plus*: BiNews and Letters

NORTH *Bi* NORTHWEST

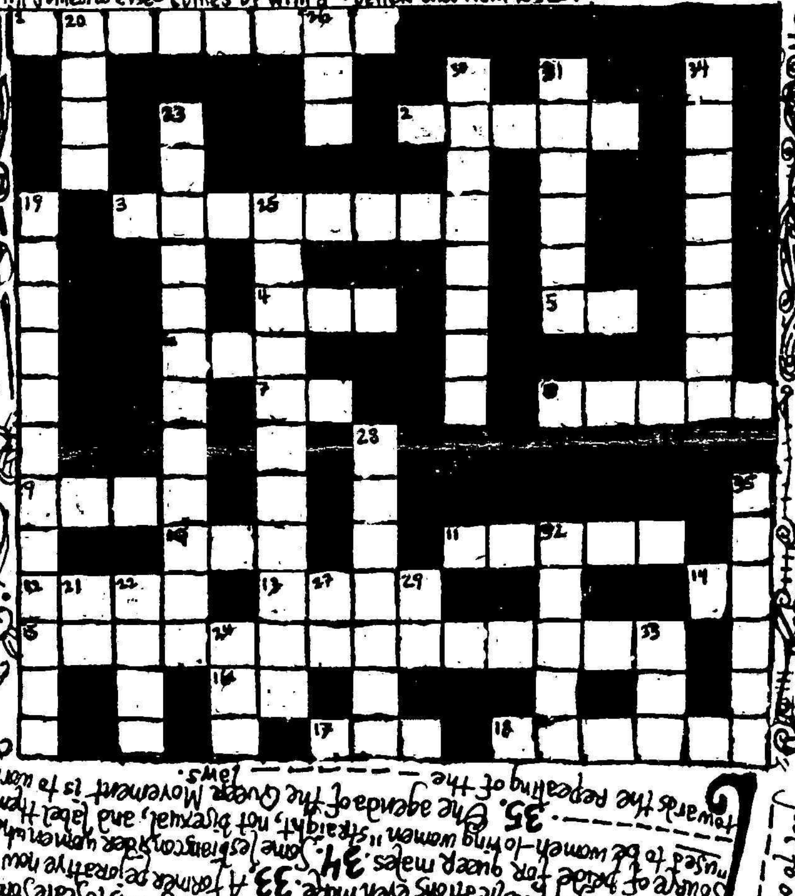
The Newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of Gay Community Social Services

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1993 **VOLUME 6, NUMBER 5**

THE ULTIMATE BISEXUAL CROSSWORD PUZZLE

....till someone else comes up with a better one next issue.

by K. Bryson



START

Across: 1. First name of this African-American bisexual writer. 2 movies depict him as gay & straight, respectively. 2. Transgender, sm, bisexual, lesbian & gay: this inclusive term incorporates all these communities into a larger one. 3. A term which, if sought after in early 20c. dictionaries, would describe the hermaphroditism of a clam. 4. The founder of the sensuous state of self-stimulation: _ _ _N. 5. These two letters are said to represent the fluidity of this consensual community more than a slash (/). 6. An adjective describing the controversy over a recent issue of "On Our Backs."

Across, continued: 7. Initials of this earnest Irish bisexual writer imprisoned for homosexuality in the 19th c. 8. This local Northwest publication recently removed BISEXUAL from its masthead for "space reasons," as well as discontinued its bisexual column because of its "controversial nature." 9. This Latin "root" puts the bite in dams. 10. Cultural monosexuality implies the existence of, or insistence on, this number of orientations (tricky!). 11. When one's sexual interest surges, one is said to be _ _ _ _ _INOUS. 12. What type of sex acts did "Pussy Galore" recently feature? 13. Slang term for female bisexual. 14. That spiciest of Freud's three parts of personality. 15. Single letter personal pronoun + full name of one of the most prominent of the blatantly bisexual Bloomsbury bunch, on whose novel the current movie "Orlando" is based. 16. Initials to an Early Eighties New Wave singer who helped in paving the way towards more mainstream acceptance of androgyny, à la Flock of Seagulls, Annie Lennox. 17. Along with other bad "isms", such as racism, sexism and heterosexism, this gerontophobia must be confronted: _ _ _ISM. 18. Prince's latest album— bisexuality or A_ _ _O_Y_ _?

Down: 19. Along with monogamy, serial monogamy and celibacy, this is another life-style choice actively supported by the bisexual movement. 20. An electrical slang term for a bisexual. 21. This type of drug user was/is scapegoated as a carrier of the HIV virus, as well as Hispanics and gay and bisexual men. 22. The first name of Woolf's bi female cross-dressing lover, upon whom the novel "Orlando" is based. 23. A sporty term for a bisexual. 24. Once considered a blanket term for all queers, the inference is now generally male. 25. A fear of eroticism and erotic impulses. 26. When one is open about one's sexuality (or about anything disdained by mass society and culture), one is _ _ _ _. 27. This lesbian-identified playwright/performer sleeps with men, but does not call herself bi: HOLL_ _EAR. 28. In most basic terms, homophobes and other sexual bigots often object to others's style of _ _ _ _ _ _ _.

Down, continued: 29. Editor's initials of a scintillating example of a local bi newsletter. 30. We're here, we're queer, and we're _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (but we're also spelt upside-down!). 31. The first name of a talk-show host who unintentionally gave the bisexual mag "Anything That Moves" quite a bit of publicity recently. 32. Not usually erotophobic concerning the use of the "F" word, this word seems to scare some lesbian and gay publications even more. 33. A former pejorative now a source of pride for queer males. 34. Some lesbians consider women who "used to be women-loving women" straight, not bisexual, and label them _ _ _ _ _ _ _. 35. One agenda of the Queer Movement is to work towards the repealing of the _ _ _ _ _ _ _ laws.

See Answer key on page 12

Join! $10-$50/year, sliding scale

I want to wear my bisexuality in my wallet. Make me a card carrying bisexual! Enclosed is $_______for a 1 year membership.

Subscribe! $10/year, flexible

I want to receive the latest bi news, opinions, writing and art 6 times a year. Enclosed is $______for a 1 year subscription.

*Total enclosed: $*_____________

Name____

Address______________________________________

City: __________________________ State/Prov. ________

Zip: ________________ Phone (optional): _____________

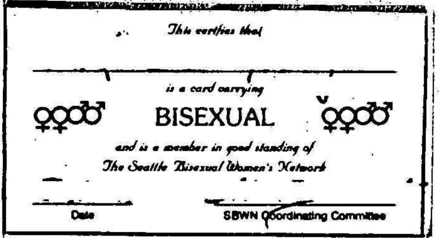
How did you hear about us? _________________________

All contributions are tax-deductible

Please enclose cash, or checks made payable to SBWN

Send to: SBWN, PO Box 30645, Greenwood Station, Seattle, WA 98103-0645

Join the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network and become a card-carrying bisexual!



This certifies that

____

is a card carrying

⚢⚣ BISEXUAL ⚢⚣

and is a member in good standing of

The Seattle Bisexual Women's Network

__________ ____________________

Date SBWN Coordinating Committee

Memberships are $10-$50 a year with a sliding scale, and are open to women everywhere. See mail-in form above.

SBWN Statement of Purpose

We are a group of women from diverse backgrounds working to create a feminist bisexual support network and to promote, in both the heterosexual world and in the lesbian/gay community, the understanding and acceptance of bisexuality as one of many valid sexual identities.

We regard ourselves as part of the community that is united against heterosexism and homophobia. We are dedicated to the right of all people to define their own sexuality, free from any social, political, or economic coercion. The discriminations we face on the bases of our gender and our sexuality are not the only forms of oppression. We recognize that oppression is nonhierarchical and that none of us is free until all of us are free. We are invested in the feminist struggle to transform our culture into one free of all forms of bigotry, hatred, and exploitation.

We seek to provide a safe place for women to explore all aspects of their sexual orientation and identity. All women are welcome to attend SBWN activities. We are exclusively a women's group in order to create a safe space for women's expression and leadership. We come together to affirm ourselves and our choices.

North Bi Northwest

Editor: Erica Avery
*Editorial Assistance:*Peggy Walsh
Advertising Manager:
Delvina Crumbaugh
Contributors:
Liz Nania, Kathleen Bryson
Distribution:
Lizabeth, Bettykay and volunteers

North Bi Northwest is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network. It is produced by women and is feminist in content. We feature news and events pertinent to the bisexual community, as well as essays, poetry, photography,art, book reviews, fiction, cartoons, interviews, erotica, and an advice column. We welcome submissions from women and men that concern feminism, politics, sexuality, or anything of interest to bisexual women.

Copyright 1993 by North Bi Northwest (ISSN 1050-4680). Please request permission before reprinting anything from this publication (see address above). Views expressed in North BiNorthwest are those of individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SBWN. We encourage contributions from our readers.

Deadline for submissions to the next issue: **November 15** (see address above).

North Bi Northwest is available by subscription (see above), or at area bookstores and newstands including Red and Black books, Beyond the Closet, Bailey Coy books, and Fremont Place Book Company.

THE SEATTLE BISEXUAL WOMEN'S NETWORK

P.O. Box 30645, Greenwood Station, Seattle, WA 98103-0645
Phone: (206) 783-7987

SBWN holds regular meetings every other Sunday at 6pm. The Newcomer's group meets every other Monday at 7:15pm. For information call our message machine and your call will be returned (with discretion, if necessary). SBWN can always use volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. Give us a call or speak to a facilitator at a meeting.

The **Seattle Bisexual Men's Union (SBMU)** is a men's anti-sexist support and social group that meets twice a month. See back page calendar for meetings and events.

BiNet, the Bisexual Network of Seattle, is a multi-gender group dedicated to providing information about bisexuality, promoting bisexual visibility, and drawing together bi-friendly people for big fun. BiNet has also spun-off several small social, support, and special interest organizations. See calendar for events and meetings.

North Bi Northwest is a publication of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of Gay Community Social Services, PO Box 22228, Seattle, WA 98122. (Not for correspondence with SBWN or North Bi Northwest)

North Bi Northwest is printed on bi paper! (50% recycled)

From the Editor

We have a wonderful newsletter for you this bi-month. Our request for submissions concerning women's health yielded some thoughtful and fascinating pieces. There is a lot of important information in these few pages! Thanks to those who submitted. Thanks also to Greg and Brian for their generous help. The theme for our next issue is Spirituality and Religion, we look forward to hearing what you have to say!

Prompted by a member's suggestion, and fueled by several criticisms over the years, we devoted our September 12 meeting to discussing changes to our statement of purpose. A dozen women looked over our original SOP, written 5 years ago at the group's beginning, as well as 2 new versions recently written by group members. After an hour and a half of friendly and thoughtful discussion of feminism, our relationship to the "gay" community, and English grammar, we emerged with a new SOP we could all live with. See page 2 for our new improved Bisexual Women's manifesto. ---*Erica*

Good Bi!

As the seasons change and classrooms everywhere are filled once again, we'd like to say a word about Lucy, bi woman extraordinaire and former SBWN treasurer. Lucy relocated to Atlanta this September to pursue a graduate degree in computer science at Georgia Tech. Although her presence here will be missed, we wish her the best. —*Rhonda Snyder*

Letters

To the Editor:

For a year now, I have been living in Seattle, the city to which I relocated in search of a bisexual community. It has been a year of many discoveries, including the realization that "bisexual" means many things to many people. Here, unfortunately, it seems to mean: "men and women, both, all the time." Respect for all-womyn's space is hard to come by and begrudgingly given. In what I thought would be a feminist womyn's and pro-feminist men's community, I frequently must justify the need for all-womyn's space. I am writing, specifically, to address the relationships of SBWN to BiNET and the Seattle Bisexual Men's Union (SBMU).

The lines between these three groups is increasingly fuzzy. As a volunteer with both BiNET and SBWN, I see an overlap not only of activists, but of resources. Projects of either group seem to belong to both, or, more often, SBWN projects seem to become subsumed under BiNET, a mixed gender group. BiNET has felt to me in the eight months or so I have been involved, an anti-feminist and hostile environment for womyn. This overshadowing by a mixed gender group of an all-womyn's group is disturbing. The relationship of BiNET to SBMU is equally unclear.

Specifically, I want to address this newsletter. Above its title, North Bi Northwest announces itself as the newsletter to SBWN, which we all know is an all-womyn's organization. Why, then, does NBiNW publish men's writings? Lately, in addition to the male-authored "journalistic" pieces (the presence of which is NOT justified by the compromise that no women were willing to attend or write about a given event), NBiNW has recently chosen to publish men's creative writing and, even, a personal ad. The first suggest to men as a reader that NBiNW is no longer a safe place for womyn's self-expression; the latter causes me to ask, what about the credo, "We are not a dating service"?

Additionally, NBiNW has been publishing the calendar of the SBMU. While BiNET welcomes womyn (in policy at least), SBMU's meetings are explicitly men-only. Why is SBWN publicizing meetings closed to its members? If the men need an avenue for the growth of their organization, they need to develop one and stop using the limited resources of a womyn's organization.

I have heard the argument that men's writings are or should be included in the newsletter due to the low volume of contributions generally. This argument holds no water, as the inclusion of men's writing changes the very nature of the journal. Besides, the inclusion of male-authored pieces may, in fact, repel potential womyn contributors looking for an all-womyn's journal in which to write.

SBWN was a beacon to me, traveling cross-country in search of a large, strong and feminist bisexual community. I am appalled at the low value placed on all-womyn's space and the pressure from the Seattle bisexual men's community to relinquish that necessity.

In sisterhood,
Lynne Vickery

Editor's response: *I share your concern about sexism and the integrity of women-only space in the bisexual community. At this time I would like to respond only to the issues you raise concerning North Bi Northwest.*

When I first took over the newsletter two years ago, I was surprised that there was no question that submissions from men would be accepted. The former editor, Beth, explained that men had actually complained about the dearth of men's contributions and her attitude was "well if you guys would write anything decent we'd publish it." When they did, she did. Accepting men's creative work is not a recent development at all, as you will see if you examine back issues.

We will not publish just anything. I have rejected submissions from men that I felt objectified women. I have published submissions from women that I felt did the same thing, because this is a women's newsletter. I would prefer to see a lot more publications by and for women only, free of articles even about men. However, I don't think that is what women seek in a bisexual newsletter.

North Bi Northwest is entirely subscription and sales-supported. Many of these subscriptions belong to men or groups to which men belong, and many of the sales are to men. Certainly the newsletter is seen by many men at events and in public bookstores. Even if we

Continued on page 6

News

Want to know how to keep your cool, your sanity, your bones strong and your heart healthy throughout **menopause** - without taking estrogen - and STILL FEEL GREAT? Susun Weed's unique approach celebrates the change. We welcome men and women of ALL ages to this beneficial workshop! Friday, October 22, 7pm-9pm, Crossroads Learning Center, 1412 12th Avenue, Seattle, WA. 325-8790. $3.50 donation requested.

Support group at North Seattle Community College Women's Center: Embracing Our Diversity as Lesbian and BiSexual Women: October 4-November 22, Mondays 11am to noon. Women-identified women join together to affirm our identity to create and support community. Our focus and direction will develop from the issues participants bring to each meeting. Facilitated by Brigitte Snelling, MS. Quarterly fee $25. Call 527-3696 to register

The Oberlin College Lesbian, Gay and **Bisexual Alumni** Association's second reunion is November 12-14, 1993 at Oberlin, Ohio. OLGBA is the only US sexual minority alumni organization actually chartered by a college or university and has 900+ members! Bobbi Keppel, Advisory Committee member for bisexual issues, hopes other bisexuals will attend, especially older women. Contact the Alumni Office for more information.

Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities is offering a 10-week **coming out support group** for those newly out or still exploring. the women's group will start October 13 and will be facilitated by Arinna Moon, MA. The men's group also starts on October 13 and will be facilitated by Robert Cherry, MA. For more information, please call 282-9307. SCSSM is located at 200 West Mercer, Suite 300 in Seattle.

The Seattle Gay Clinic provides **testing** for HIV and STD's, as well as free health care for HIV+ people up until their first hospitalization. HIV testing is 6:30-9pm on Tuesdays and 10:30am-1:30pm on Saturdays. STD testing is Thursdays 6:30-9pm. Testing includes a counseling session. Appointments are recommended but not required. Donations are requested. SGC is at 500 19th Ave E and can be reached at 461-4540.

SBWN has endorsed **National Women's Strike Day**, which is to occur October 14, 1993. The strike was first suggested by Colorado writer Nicky Marone in a column for the New York times on August 2, 1992. Response was "immediate and intense." The purpose of the Strike day, according to the organizers, is to draw attention to the persistent devaluation of the female contribution in the workplace. Despite 25 years of "progress", women continue to bear salary, educational, and advancement inequities, and are discriminated against on the basis of parenthood or potential parenthood. A one day general women's strike is a non-violent action electrifying enough to get the attention of the economic establishment. The organizers acknowledge that not all women can strike even if they want to. Women are encouraged to simply not go to work, but there are other ways to support the effort. Both women and men can wear white arm bands on October 14 to demonstrate solidarity. Also on this day, no woman should spend any money except in women-owned businesses.

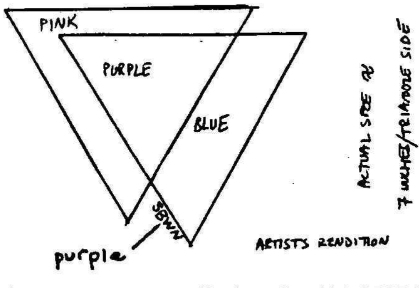
A half-dozen lesbian and bisexual women in Santa Cruz needed a fundraiser for a calendar promoting safer sex between women - so they held a **topless car wash.** It is just as legal for women to be shirtless in public in Santa Cruz as it is for men. They raised $250 in one day, charging $5 a car, and only had one slight setback when the police appeared and said that there had been a complaint and it was only legal for women to be topless if there were no complaints. So the women had to move back from the sidewalk where they were "distracting motorists." Most of the customers and on-lookers were'nt complainingat all. The women were happy to wash men's cars "as long as they don't overstep any bounds, like trying to touch me," said one woman, "If they want to see the beautiful bodies we were born with, we could us ethe money." As well as raising money, the women "got to confront boob-phobia. It's so funny how people react to breasts."

Family Values Department:: Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International, PO Box 50360, Washington, DC 20091. (202) 583-8029. They publish a 20 page bibliography, an annotated bibliography of books for children with lesbian and gay parents, and a quarterly newsletter which is free with a $15.00 membership contribution. We assume they are bi-friendly, even if their name doesn't reflect it...

COLAGE, Children of Lesbians and Gays everywhere (formerly Just For Us). This group has expanded into public advocacy as well as providing support for its members. They assist local groups, stage an annual conference, publish a quarterly newsletter, provide media referrrals and public speakers, and distribute information. They also stress that they respect privacy and that their new name still "maintains the anonymity many kids need." They can be reached at (202) 583-8029▼

COMING OCTOBER 11: THE BISEXUAL LOGO T-SHIRT! AVAILABLE IN TWO COLORS: BLACK AND HEATHER GREY. SIZES ARE LARGE, X-LARGE, AND OVER-SIZE (APPROZIMATELY 4X-LARGE). PRICED AT $12 EACH, SBWN MEMBWERS MAY BI THE SHIRTS FOR ONLY $10 (A 15% SAVINGS, WE TOLD YOU MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES!)

GET THEM AT SBWN MEETINGS AND AT NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY CELEBRATIONS. WE CAN ALSO MAIL THEM FOR AN ADDITIONAL $2 POSTAGE AND HANDLING.



WEAR OUR COLORS WITH BISEXUAL PRIDE!

MENOPAUSAL QUESTIONING

by Bettykay

As I approach menopause I am becoming more concerned about my health. I have questions and concerns for which the medical profession has no answers, because there have been few studies of women's bodies or women's health. There have been even fewer studies of older women and menopause. The issue I currently face is whether to take estrogen or not. Here are some of my thoughts on the issue:

I don't want to take estrogen because I will continue to have periods.

I need to take estrogen because it may prevent me from getting osteoporosis. My grandmother has it very badly.

I don't need to take estrogen because I do a fair amount of exercise, and resolve to keep it up, so my bones should be strong and healthy.

I need to take estrogen because my bones may be thin from taking Prednisone (steroids) for many years. Estrogen is known to reduce further thinning and bone fractures.

I don't want to take estrogen because I have a fibroid that causes slight discomfort. I have been told it should decrease in size as my natural estrogen level drops.

I want to take estrogen in hopes that it will reduce my vaginal dryness and restore my "libido."

I don't want to take estrogen because it is not recommended for women with gall bladder disease. My mother had her gall bladder removed some years ago.

I want to take estrogen because my mother, cousin, and sister all do.

I don't want to take estrogen because I believe that menopause is a natural process.

I want to take estrogen so that I can sleep at night.

I don't need to take estrogen because I don't (so far) have hot flashes or mood swings.

I need to take estrogen because I am small boned and have had not children, which puts me at risk for osteoporosis.

I have frequent nose bleeds for ten days before my period, I rarely have them the ten days afterwards. To prevent nose bleeds, should I take estrogen or progesterone?

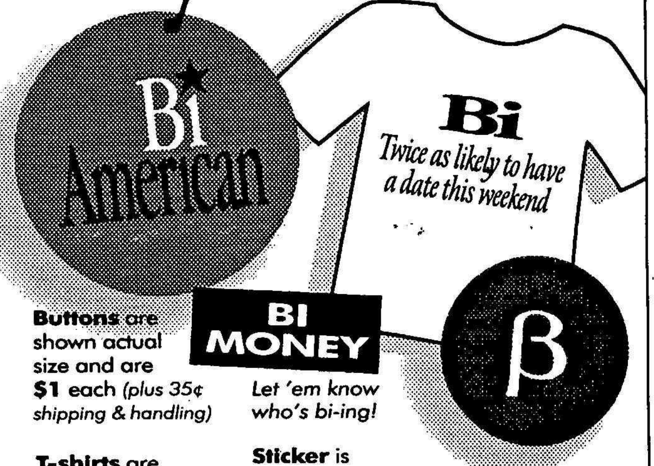
At this point I don't know what I will do. I hope that the questions asked and the discussions started by women my age, will provide more information for women younger than us.▼

Advertise with us!

Get your message out to the Bisexual Women's Community!

We welcome advertising from bi-friendly businesses, individuals, organizations and services. Our rates start at $10 for a business card size ad for one issue, and we offer 15-30% discounts for advertising in one or more issues. For more information please call 783-7987 and leave a message for Delvina Crumbaugh.

Buys for Bi's


Bi American
Bi
Twice as likely to have a date this weekend
BI MONEY
β

Buttons are shown actual size and are **$1** each *(plus 35¢ shipping & handling)*

Let 'em know who's bi-ing!

T-shirts are Hanes Beefy T's, of 100% cotton. Available in M, L, and XL. **$15** each *(plus $2 shipping & handling)*

Sticker is shown actual size and are sold in strips of 10 for **$2** *(plus 35¢ shipping & handling)*

To see our other items, write for our free flyer!

Quantity discounts available.

Send check or money order to:

BiLines
1559 Rockville Pike
Suite 213
Rockville, MD 20852

BiLines

A bi-owned business for bisexuals

Letters

Continued from page 3

didn't accept men's creative work, men would buy and read the newsletter, which would still render our space less than completely safe for women seeking to publish their work. Making the newsletter unavailable for men to buy or see is an option. We're not in this for the money. But this step would also severely limit the newsletter's circulation to women and groups to which women belong.

*Why does SBWN's newsletter publish meetings closed to SBWN's members?. As a favor to SBMU, which sells newsletters and subscriptions for us at meetings and events and helps us mail out the newsletter. We also publish men's meetings because many of our readers have men in their lives and we're not keeping it a secret that there are support groups for them. I believe **North Bi Northwest** has fulfilled an important role in helping the bisexual community as a whole to grow by publishing information about men's and mixed groups.*

As for accepting a personal ad from a man, we did so because we had just printed 20 ads from women, some of which were not specifically directed at women. Though we received no criticism of the ads, we have since decided not to accept any more personal ads at all. A lot of people thought they were fun, and SBWN may not be a dating service but that doesn't mean bi people don't date.

*There are only four women who are regularly involved in publishing the newsletter. Outside of these four women, the people that take the most interest in the newsletter, from contributions to distribution, are men. With few exceptions, I see their interest as contributing to the growth of the newsletter, not as usurping our resources. To me a better question is not why do men contribute to **North BiNorthwest**, but why does BiNet use SBWN's non-profit status for its publications and activities instead of working on getting its own 501-c3?*

A meeting, well publicized and open to everyone, was held on July 5 to specifically discuss the newsletter, what it's been and where it's going. Two women besides me attended. Knowing you had concerns about men's involvement in the newsletter, I mentioned the meeting to you in May in hopes that you would attend and raise these issues. I am disappointed that you have chosen to write a critical letter rather than participating in the creation of the bisexual women's newsletter you wish to see.

I believe the newsletter, and decisions about it, belong to those who care enough to do the work involved in making themselves a part of it. I hope to receive some constructive feedback and suggestions regarding the decision about whether we want to continue to accept submissions from men. I also hope that the problem of sexism in the bi community will be discussed in a more constructive and specific manner. -Erica

Dear SBWN,

I had just put my subscription renewal check in the envelope when I read your offer of a free subscription in exchange for monthly contributions. I think I'll try it! I do more artwork than writing, so you'll usuallyt get an illustration or a cartoon. But I've written for North Bi Northwest before and was again inspried to write, so here's my contribution for the next issue. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to express myself! North Bi Northwedst is feminist, honest and unassuming (lots of bi periodicals tend to be hipper-than-thou, and it turns me off).

Good Luck!
Liz Nania
Brookline, MA

Please see page 11 for Liz's piece on body image.

To the editor:

The Seattle Bisexual Men's Union (SBMU) endorsed and helped organize a support presence at this year's Take Back The Night (TBTN), as it had for the previous two years. This letter is a response to Andrea Brown's printed in the last issue, charging bi men with inappropriately "walking in street behind" TBTN. SBMU men participated in two discussion workshops on sexism held before TBTN events. When the TBTN march began, we were part of a men's support presence, and we walked along side on the sidewalk. Our original plan was to stand on the sidewalk in support as TBTN women marched by on Broadway. However, some women in the march asked some men in support to "talk with and keep an eye on" two disruptive and threatening, possibly drunk, males walking along on Broadway. So we talked to them as they walked down Broadway and kept an eye on them afterward. The march turned east off Broadway, the creeps followed, so we turned as well. We stayed on the sidewalk except to cross at intersections. The dozen men affiliated with SBMU and BiNet walked together, and did not "walk in the street behind" TBTN as Andrea Brown charged. The men she saw were not members of our groups. Had we seen these men, we would have spoken to them and asked them to join our support presence on the sidewalk.

SBMU and BiNet men will continue their anti-sexist work, including educating and challenging ourselves, each other, and men outside our groups. We will continue to support TBTN and other women's actions and projects. TBTN organizers have not contacted us to discuss any problems with our participation, however, we continually work on the linkage of sexism and heterosexism, and are always open to constructive suggestions as to how we might improve our groups' efforts. Please feel free to contact us by calling 720-4506, or write to us at the PO box.

The men in our groups, with all their shortcomings, have a solid record of challenging sexism, and of being accountable and trustworthy allies to women in the struggle to create a world free of all oppression.

In solidarity,
ben e factory
for SBMU

SELF-HELP AND MENSTRUAL EXTRACTION

By Lynne Vickery

It used to be that women's health care was provided by midwives, women who had learned from other women about birth control, abortion, herbal treatment and birthing. Then, about the mid-1800s, male physicians who had previously looked down on "gynecology" as unchallenging, dirty and unappealing work, realized how much power these women healers had and how much money the male physicians were losing to them. They created the AMA, outlawed abortion, birth control and midwifery, and began us on a path of patriarchal medical care that exists to this day.

That legacy affects us deeply. Most women grow up ignorant of and alienated from their bodies. Basic functions of ovulation, menstruation, and reproduction are not widely taught and most women remain unable to describe their own anatomy accurately. Our health care system focuses on disease and label many women's normal changes as such. Few health care providers focus on health or inform their clients about normal bodily variations over a cycle or over a lifetime.

In truth, only women can do this for ourselves. Intuitively, it makes no more sense that we rely on a care provider we see once or twice a year (if that) to describe for us what is our normal. "Gynecology" today focuses on birth control, pregnancy, birth control side effects and vaginal yeast. In addition, this focus on pregnancy and birth control leaves women who do not have sex with men without a way to describe their health status. Lesbian health care is nonexistent on any large scale, and we as bisexual women notice its absence too. We have the tools we need to describe our own health, to monitor changes and detect potential problems. Vaginal, cervical, clitoral and breast self-exam, as part of a self-help group, can be a powerful tool to learn about our own bodies and return the power back to whom it belongs-women.

One of the most revolutionary acts a woman can participate in is menstrual extraction (ME). Perhaps you've heard about it; it's gotten a lot of recent press, mostly negative, of course. ME is a home health care technique that empties the contents of a woman's uterus. It is done within a context of friendship and support, as part of a self-help group in which the woman having ME is an equal participant. Some have labeled ME "do it yourself abortion", but this incorrectly states the method, purpose and potential of ME. Unlike clinic abortions, ME is typically done before a woman can be definitively diagnosed with pregnancy, often on the day she expects her period.

Most women who have ME do not know for sure if they are pregnant, and many women have ME to lighten or shorten difficult periods or as birth control, as part of a fertility awareness method. ME is done in a woman's home, making it a self-care method that does not involve travel or the exchange of "money for services" as does clinic abortion. ME is performed very soon after a missed period, before a pregnancy test can confirm a pregnancy (because by that time - typically, 6 weeks since the first day of her last period, it becomes less safe to use the ME technique.) ME requires full participation of the woman having it, unlike clinical abortion where a woman can easily be the passive patient, discouraged by doctors and staff from being involved at all. Most importantly, ME is something women do with each other, self-empowered, away from the medical professionals who have historically misinformed and mistreated women.

The 1992 publication of Rebecca Chalker and Carol Downer's *A Woman's Book of Choices* makes the technique of self-help and ME accessible to more women than ever. Veterans of the feminist women's health care movement, the authors describe the history of ME, self-help and development of less traumatic abortion techniques (modeled after ME). Other books are available, such as *Our Bodies, Our Selves; How to stay out of the Gynecologists Office*, and *New View of a Woman's Body*. All are excellent resources.

ME happens only after much training. Firstly, women in a self-help group learn how to do a self exam, using a plastic speculum, mirror and flashlight to examine the vagina, clitoris and cervix (opening to the uterus). Over time, the group can learn to monitor changes in vaginal and cervical mucous and coloring of the cervix to detect increased fertility, pregnancy and normal cyclical changes. The group members can learn how to do uterine size checks ("pelvic exams"), practice breast exam, identify yeast overgrowth (yeast infection"), discuss birth control and its changes on the body, learn donor insemination technique, and to share crucial information about the wide range of normal experiences women and their bodies have. Once skilled in these techniques, the group can begin to learn ME and apprentice with a knowledgeable woman who has experience with the technique. It is a commitment; most groups meet anywhere from once a week to once a month for several months until all these skills are mastered.

ME utilizes similar technology as clinical abortion but it is generally more simple. The contents of the uterus (which may or may not contain a very early pregnancy) are removed by suction. A jar is used to collect the contents and a large syringe (without the needle) is connected to the jar by tubing. Pumping the syringe creates a vacuum in the jar, and suction. A two-way bypass valve is necessary to prevent air being forced back up into the uterus (this - called an embolism- is partially why back alley abortions were so dangerous). The syringe and jar are connected by more tubing to a cannula - a small, flexible tube, thinner than a drinking straw - which is inserted into the uterus. Larger cannulas (requiring painful cervical dilation) and more powerful suction machines called "aspirators" are used in abortion clinics, but the principal is the same. One crucial difference is the participation of the woman having ME: she pumps the syringe. This gives her control over the

Continued on page 8

SELF-HELP &MENSTRUAL EXTRACTION

Continued from page 7

whole thing. She can stop if she needs to take a break. In a clinic, an abortion typically lasts two to five minutes; ME lasts between 15 and 60 minutes, although with far less pain.

Chalker and Downer offer very specific guidelines for safe ME, including details about disinfecting and sterilizing cannulas and speculums, how to obtain the necessary equipment (or make it from easier-to-get household materials), and the sort of back-up emergency plan a self-help group needs to ensure the safety of its members. The training and apprenticeship is crucial to learn to do safe, complete ME. When done over time, with a knowledgeable mentor, this training is more extensive than the training most physicians receive in abortion technique.

Little research has been done on ME since it is outside the medical establishment. Most critics of ME argue it is unsafe, without any data. Anecdotal evidence from over 2000 women involved in self-help groups nationally seems to indicate that it is as safe or safer than clinical abortions. The cannulas used are smaller and more flexible than those used in clinics and there is not one reported case of a uterine perforation (breaking through the uterus with a cannula) during an ME. It is necessary after an extraction for the members of the group to remain in close contact for a week or two, to identify and address any early problems. Signs of infection (fever, pain) and continued pregnancy are monitored. If the group believes a woman is still pregnant after an extraction, a "reaspiration", or a repetition of the ME, can be done. For an infection, most likely a group would need to rely on their back up plan. Most groups work near a sympathetic nurse, midwife or clinic on whom they could rely for assistance. All in all, ME seems to be no less safe than clinical abortion, if its practitioners are well-trained, and is certainly more accessible.

The legality of ME is currently unknown. Some fear self-helpers could be brought up on charges of practicing medicine without a license (as author Downer was in the early 1970s for inserting yogurt into a friend's vagina to cure her yeast infection.). However, since ME is done before a test could confirm a pregnancy, there is a lot of gray area here. For legal safety, most groups are closed and cautious. If a trip to a doctor's office or emergency room becomes necessary, it is recommended that only one of the women from the group go with the woman who has had ME, in order to protect the others' identities.

Menstrual extraction is not a service that one woman can provide for another. It is part of a commitment that each woman must make to learning about her own body and those of her self-help group members. Many people acquired knowledge of ME technique when abortion was not legal but that doesn't mean this technique is not of use today. Through self-help and ME, women can gain self-knowledge, became experts on their own bodies, use home health care that is safe and inexpensive, and be active partners with their professional health care providers. It is true that over 80% of all US counties do not have an abortion provider. For many women, ME fills this void, provides an otherwise unavailable service. Perhaps ME could be a technique women offer others, traveling from city to city, teaching and performing ME. In any case, this is valuable knowledge that we must hold on to and pass on. If you are interested in starting a self-help group of your own, or would like to have more information, call Lynne or Joan at Cedar River Clinic, 255-0473.

Editor's note: We need to remind you that under no circumstances should menstrual extraction be tried using only the information found in this article. A woman who has done this before, and whom you trust, should assist your group in any home health procedure like this one. ▼

Support groups, **housing file,** *fiction,* non-fiction, ***magazines,*** newspapers, *emergency referrals,* **service referrals - accountants, attorneys, carpenters, chiropractors, dentists, lawncare, plumbers, therapists - dances,** coming out groups, safe sex kits, **a place to hang out...**

All at the **Lesbian Resource Center**

1208 E. Pine
Seattle, WA 98122
206/322-3953

"I was just going to stay home and watch the Brady Bunch marathon on Nick at Night, but then I picked up my copy of the *LRC Community News* and it said there was a great band playing. That was so much fun. And while I was reading I saw that there was this softball tournament this weekend so I'm definitely going to watch that. And I saw that there's a rap group this Wednesday night. And I saw an ad for a mechanic so I think I'll finally get my car fixed...."

LRC Community News.
$12 a year by mail or available from newsstands, bookstores and bars all around town.

1208 E. Pine
Seattle, WA 98122
206/322-3953

TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE IN THE BI WORLD

By Denise (Deni) Ottoson

The Seattle Bisexual Women's Network is revisiting the issue of transgendered women's place in the group. After a discussion beginning three years ago, a policy of allowing transgendered women into the group, except the newcomers' meeting, was adopted. The current revisiting comes about as a regular annual discussion. This time it is underscored because a transsexual woman who felt slighted a year ago at a function sponsored by SBWN is now taking her complaints public and recently attended the newcomers' meeting, apparently to draw out the issue.

I volunteered to write this article because I sense that there is still a lot of unclarity about what it is to be transgendered and how that operates in the real world. I understand that transgendered men attend Seattle Bisexual Men's Union functions without much controversy or comment. I support fully the notion that safety issues and guidelines have to be in place about who attends meetings, particularly the newcomers' group. There are a number of issues about who attends that group, only one of which concerns transgendered women. I approach this not only as a bisexual and transgendered woman, but also as a member of the SBWN facilitators' collective, which wrestles constantly with these issues. What follows is a mixture of didactic and personal information that hopefully provides some clarity about the matter.

I wear a lot of metaphorical hats, or rather, I wear a hat that has a lot of different ribbons and ornaments for it. The basic hat I wear is that of woman. Beyond that the variations are almost endless (I'm Gemini, and variations come easy). Some of the most common ribbons I wear are those of resourceress, teacher, team leader, board member, volunteer coordinator, facilitator (all function related ribbons), Green (political ribbon), Pagan (spiritual ribbon), bisexual, and transgendered. The ribbon I wear when I'm at SBWN or BiNet functions says "bisexual woman."

I am also transgendered, a transsexual. That means essentially I am, in my core identity, female—despite having been born with male chromosomes and body. Transsexuality is a universal human condition—a permanent state of being. This happens to an estimated 1 out of every 1,000 to 2,000 children. It happens to people born of either anatomical sex. It happens in every human society on earth. Though male-to-female transsexuals have been recognized and served moreextensively than female-to-male transsexuals, there are many female-to-male transgendered people and the ratio of sexual reassignment surgeries now being done is about 50-50. In the United States there are a number of "gender clinics" such as the Ingersoll Center in Seattle and the Program for Human Sexuality in Minneapolis. These centers usually offer support groups and referral to therapists, voice coaches, electrologists, and doctors who can prescribe hormones and/or perform surgeries.

Transsexuals are born, not made. There are some who are born with an extra chromosome, there are some who are born hermaphroditic, and there are some who are born without a currently recognizable physical reason for being transgendered. Gender identity is usually distinguishable by a child about the age of three. In many cases our culture, which insists that body equals gender, creates confusion and even trauma for transgendered children. (Other human cultures recognize up to seven genders and have more room for diversity.) The earliest that I distinctly remember feeling female was about when I was eight or nine. I wore girl's clothing whenever I could get away with it and prayed desperately to wake up in the morning a girl. Praying didn't work, and I became more and more isolated. In the rural Midwest in the late 1950s I had no language or tools by which to exist. As a result of that I felt betrayed by my family and community, developed a sense of sinfulness and low self-esteem, and compensated for it by rejecting the values of my family, by yet trying ever harder to "be good," and trying for many years to be as masculine as I could be—yet compulsively crossdressing and finally using alcohol as self-medication.

I discovered the language for transsexualism about 1967 and knew immediately that it meant me. Without a supportive environment, though, my attempts to deal with it failed. I came to terms with being transsexual in 1990, though I had probably been getting through to it since 1985, when I quit trying to avoid reality with alcohol. In 1990 I went through a series of rebirthing experiences, where I was able to discharge a great deal of emotional baggage around the various traumatic experiences in my life, including the divorce I was going through at the time. I had one layer peel away after another, and I was back to where I was when I was young, knowing that anatomy and core identity don't match. Fortunately, now I not only had the language to deal with it, but the medical/hormonal technology and support groups to go with the language. I have also had Landmark Education Center training in working with relationships and communication that has proven invaluable in such things as coming out to friends and family.

Some societies make room for people who are transgendered, but ours (like almost all patriarchal societies) has not been very kind or understanding. In large part it has chosen to deny the validity of transgendered peoples' experience. In response transgendered people (those who don't commit suicide) try desperately to fit into expected roles; most transgendered people my age have married, had children, good education and jobs. Most M-to-F transgender people have tried to hide themselves behind a bearded and macho image; most F-to-Ms have tried to be stereotypically feminine. It never works: people simply remain miserable living as they are, and finally most of

Continued on page 10

TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE &THE BI WORLD

Continued from page 9

them come to a point where they say, "I can't take this any longer.

When that happens, most transgendered people who are transsexual seek sexual reassignment. In the United States that means going through therapy, training and optional electrolysis, hormone treatment—and at least a year of "cross-living" to prove ability to live in the "correct" gender role. Full strength hormonal treatment, for M-to-Fs, quickly feminizes skin tone, breast development and body fat distribution, atrophies male genitalia, and even feminizes sexual arousal. Sexual reassignment surgery potentially involves a number of operations, but essentially converts male bodies into a surprisingly natural looking female one, somewhat akin to a woman who has had a hysterectomy.

Female to male transsexuals typically have mastectomies and hysterectomies, and may have their clitorises hormonally and surgically transformed into a penis. Many thousands of such operations have now been done, and the doctors have gotten good at it, though the female-to-male process is usually not as satisfactory—in that the new penis is not erectile nor ejaculatory. The entire process, from beginning therapy to surgery follow-up, takes about two years, if there are no major hitches. It is very expensive and not covered by insurance, which is why so many transgendered people, even after becoming comfortable with being transgendered, are never able to complete the process.

Acculturation for transgendered people varies widely. While anyone's preferred sex role can vary widely from individual to individual, in general M to F transgendered people have always been more interested in more traditional women's roles (cooking, sewing, child care, cleaning house, shopping). Some like myself have read and supported feminist thought for decades. A number of us have spent years in close contact with women as roommates and/or lovers and are most comfortable in the company of women. Menstruation and the whole feminine experience around that are often cited as something transgendered women can never experience and therefore cannot be "real women." Beside the fact that such thinking also eliminates every other category of women who cannot menstruate, it ignores the fact that many, if not most, transgendered women would be very happy to menstruate and to bear children, if only they could. The sense of loss around that is just as profound as it would be for any woman who finds herself unable to menstruate and/or have children.

Transgendered people need support and understanding. This is not a situation that is easily understood in the general culture of America, which has been basically set up as a rigid patriarchal world intolerant of any life experience other than that of heterosexual Christian white males. Fortunately for the majority of the world, that world view is being forced to change rapidly, despite the Republican party platform. The shows on transsexuals now done by nearly every talk show on TV have helped, though they generally trot out the most titillating people they can find. A "Picket Fences" episode on CBS December 11, 1992, dramatized sympathetically and somewhat realistically the plight of a transsexual found to be teaching school in small-town Wisconsin. The transsexuals I know are retired military people, CPAs, computer programmers, political and community activists, and so on. They are not the self-centered exhibitionists generally used to entertain TV audiences. Many are out to serve people who need help and to make this a society which accepts diversity.

Transgendered people are a very tiny minority of people in society (about .1%; gays and lesbians comprise about 10% of society), and there are not many counselors, ministers, or even mental health professionals who know any more about this than the average person—which is close to nothing.

Transgendered people are often misunderstood by gay and lesbian people as well, though generally more accepted. Gay and lesbian people don't always understand the differences between gender and sexuality either. The most common misperception is that transgendered people are just gay folk who are driven to changing their bodies because they can't accept their sexual orientation. The truth is that gender orientation comes before sexual orientation. Transgendered people may be considered heterosexual before surgery and gay afterwards. Gay and lesbian people often have to defend their gender role from heterosexual criticism and may become rigid in their own thinking. Transgendered people (and bisexual people) are really in-betweeners, and in our either-or society that is difficult for a great many people to accept.

Historical and anthropological studies of transgendered people as well as cross-cultural folklore and myth indicate that transgendered people in human history may have a much more powerful existence than now seems possible in places like the United States. In non-patriarchal societies and even some male-dominant societies transgendered people are considered respected shamans, preferred teachers, wealthy community leaders. They definitely are not people "to be cured." Our society, and particularly transgendered people themselves, need to learn the possibilities of using the skills and abilities that come with being transgendered. There is even a role model in Greek myth—Teiresias, the wisest person in ancient Greece. There is even a caution in Teiresias' life about dealing with the patriarchy—remember that Teiresias was blinded by a god for declaring that it was better being female than male.

So what are my opinions about the SBWN policy? I think all SBWN groups and meetings should be open to any woman—and that in my mind certainly includes all post-operative transgendered women and all preoperative transgendered women who are clearly crossliving. In some cases it's almost impossible to tell anyhow unless the woman self-discloses; I've met absolutely stunning younger transgendered women who are not "out" to any but their family and a core supportgroup. There may be some judgement calls, and I do not believe that SBWN is a place for anyone to work on their non-bisexual issues. It is no more appropriate for a transgendered woman to use SBWN as a sounding for transsexual issues than it is for alcoholic women to use SBWN as an AA meeting, or churchy women to use it as a religious gathering. We all have different ribbons for our metaphorical hats, and it becomes disruptive when we forget or refuse to change the ribbons to fit the occasion.

There are many books on transgendered and transvestite people, some rather clinical, some biographical, some cross-cultural. They may help you understand the phenomena.

Continued on page 12

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES: FOR A HEALTHY BODY IMAGE IN AN UNHEALTHY SOCIETY

By Liz Nania

My body image has been a source of struggle to me since my mother put me on my first diet in the third grade. I wasn't even fat as a kid; a little chubby at best. My mother felt she was fat as a girl and wanted to spare me the kind of pain she went through, I guess. I learned to feel ugly, even at age sixteen when I got down to 98 pounds by eating 700 calories a day for a year. (I gained all twenty pounds back in a month on vacation, proving how starved my system was!) Even my mother worried that I was becoming anorexic, although I don't think I was.

The summer I graduated from college I was twenty-one and on my last diet ever: the infamous grueling Scarsdale Diet. One evening something inside me suddenly snapped, and I went on a desperate binge. I tore around the apartment, stuffing as much into my mouth as possible, and in a chronic dieter's kitchen, there was precious little to stuff! When I started on the dry spaghetti I knew I was over the edge.

I started getting counseling at a community crisis center staffed by volunteers, and I don't even recall body image or food being discussed. Then Fat is a Feminist Issue came out and I devoured it (so to speak!) and vowed never to diet again. I didn't need to make any vows, however, because a lifetime of punishing my body with severe deprivation had pushed me, mercifully, to the point of no return to dieting.

Twelve years have passed, and my nutrition and self-love have steadily improved. My weight has stabilized at a well-rounded, healthy 140 (at 5'2"). My recovery was aided by reading every book on body image I could find, subscribing to Radiance magazine (for large women), and by joining a women's support group called the 'Politics of Fat' for over a year. I now know that being fat is not unhealthy; size discrimination is! And all this has come about, and I still don't qualify to be described by the word 'fat' at a mere size 16 or over. And while I'm on statistics, I want to mention the surgeon general's well-established finding that about 98% of all diets fail within a couple of years. So why do we continue to starve ourselves?

So now I have a clear, feminist, size-positive value system about women's body image. I am as comfortable and sure about that as I am about my bisexuality. But at thirty-five, I'm dismayed to realize I'm still fighting some of the same battles of self-hatred. I've recently had an urge to diet, which I know is not an option for me because I'd rebel furiously within an hour, and because I know diets don't work in the long run. (Hell, if they did, we'd have a country full of skinny women!) Something is missing; I guess I miss that incredible, liberating joy I once had in knowing my lover thinks my body is perfect and gorgeous. Is this asking too much? I really don't know. I'd like to be able to be solidly grounded in self-esteem from within, rather than depending on the validation of others. Is this possible in our culture?

Being around lesbians and bi women definitely helps. It's not unusual for little ol' size sixteen me to be the fattest woman on a stretch of beach, or in a roomful of straight women, and my self-esteem plummets. Bi women and lesbians look much more physically diverse, although we still are dealing with all the shitty anti-fat propaganda that our heterosexual sisters are. We have learned to more fully accept the many fascinating variations of women's bodies, but we still have a ways to go. I would like to see looksism, size-discrimination and women's preoccupation with our weight become important topics for discussion in the bi women's and lesbian communities, and among heterosexual women, especially! Twenty years after the beginning of the fat liberation movement, these topics are still viewed as trivial or embarrassing. Let's face it; you, your lover, or your best friend is probably being held back by hatred for parts of your body. Let's not let our power, health, and well-being be diminished in order to try to fit the mold. Our bodies are beautiful just as they are!▼

Recommended reading:
Radiance, *the Magazine for large women, bimonthly from Oakland, CA*
The Beauty Myth, *by Naomi Wolf, an inspiring best-seller*
Shadow on a Tightrope, *writings by women from the Fat Liberation movement, Aunt Lute Press.*

TRANSGENDERED IN THE BI WORLD

Continued from page 10

Books I recommend for those with questions are:

(1) *The Uninvited Dilemma: A Question of Gender*, by Kim Elizabeth Stuart
This is currently the most used book-length "explanation" of transsexualism and is based on interviews with transgendered people.

(2) *In Search of Eve: Transsexual Rites of Passage*, by Anne Bolin
An excellent book but largely limited to the male-to-female experience.

(3) *Fantastic Women: Sex, Gender and Transvestism*, by Annie Woodhouse
This is a excellent feminist book on transvestites, though there is some discussion of transsexual people.

There are a large number of articles available from a journal called TAPESTRY, put out by the International Foundation for Gender Education. The IFGE is a major clearinghouse of information about transsexual and transvestite people. Though there is a definite lack of good and readable information about the female-to-male experience, a very good personal story by Bobby Gene begins on page 49 of Issue 63 of TAPESTRY.

NOTES ON LANGUAGE:

Gender Dysphoria: The clinical literature on transsexualism used to speak of transsexuals having "gender confusion;" the term now used is "gender dysphoria," a fancy way of saying "extreme discomfort." Transsexuals, once they are given an under- standing and a vocabulary for who they are, are confused mostly by society's reluctance to give them validity.

Gender and Sexuality: For lack of its being an issue, people generally ignore the distinctions between gender and sexuality. Gender is about what kind of body one has, and gender identity is about whether one's core identity corresponds to the body or not. Sex roles are about what role one plays in life—as a male or a female or somewhere in between. Sexual orientation is about whom one is sexually attracted to or has sex with—as a gay/lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual.

Transgender, Transsexual: Essentially different terms for the same thing. I find "transgendered" to give a fuller understanding of the fact that people find themselves in the position of needing to live the life of the gender they were not physically born into. Other people argue rationally for "transsexual," saying that they have always been the same gender—it's just the body parts that don't match. Although many transgendered people pursue the process leading to sexual reassignment surgery and fulltime integration as the gender opposite their birth gender, not all do. Before the 1950s there was not surgery generally available, and transgendered people for the most part tried to live the opposite gender role without surgery such as castration. Many societies have given transgendered people honorable roles in life. Among many Native American tribes, for example, transgendered people have been considered holy people with special powers. Depending on their particular situation, transgendered people may be classified as homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual. For example, a heterosexual female-to- male transgendered person may continue to seek male sexual partners after surgery and therefore would be a gay man.

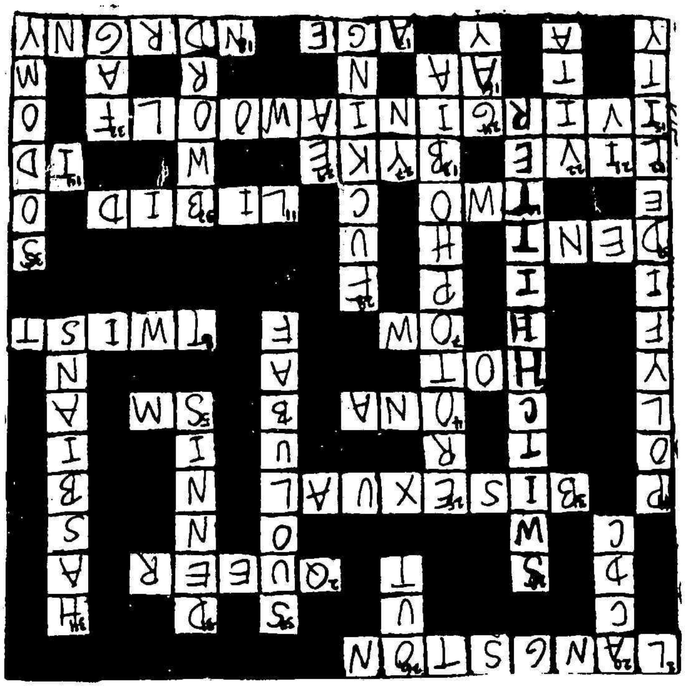
Third Sex, Third Gender: These are terms often adopted by transgendered people to describe themselves, particularly if they are not seeking surgical reassignment. It is possible, though difficult, to live as a man though born a woman, and vice-versa. History is full of people who have done it.

Eunuchs: Eunuchs are men who have had their testicles and often their penis removed, but have not had vaginas formed surgically. They sometimes live as women. Castratos were eunuchs who had been castrated deliberately as children to preserve their high voices and for centuries were considered in Europe to be the best singers. Eunuchs in the Arabian countries often served as supervisors of harems.

Hermaphrodites: A small number of children are born with both male and female genitals, though one set is usually more developed than the other. The modern way to deal with this is to surgically remove the

Continued on page 15

The Ultimate Bisexual Crossword Puzzle: Answer Key



THE POLITICS OF MENSTRUATION: WHY SANITARY PRODUCTS ARE UNSANITARY

By Liz White

In July I published an article in *Seattle Voices* about sanitary products and how they affect our health and the health of the environment. I had heard of this issue from a woman at Earth Day, who showed me a book called Whitewash and sold me my first reusable menstrual pads.

I like the pads a lot, find them comfortable to wear and not nearly as gross to deal with as I thought they'd be. I also read the book, the complete title of which is Whitewash: Exposing the Health and Environmental Dangers of Women's Sanitary Products and Disposable Diapers - What You Can Do About It by Liz Armstrong and Adrienne Scott. It was published in 1992 by HarperCollins in Canada.

I have read this book and recommended it to every woman I know. The information it contains is important, and this is a topic we need to be discussing. The disposable menstrual product industry depends on the social taboo surrounding menstruation. When we are silent about our "women's time," we are not asking questions like "What are these things made of?" and "How safe are they?"

The Start of a Scandal

The inspiration for the book Whitewash came when the authors attended a conference on Women and the Environment and met Bernadette Vallely, co-founder and director of the Women's Environmental Network, based in Britain. WEN published a book in 1989 called The Sanitary Protection Scandal, which exposed the industry's neglect of women's health and the environment.

Over 50,000 letters were written by women who read and were outraged. The letters reached manufacturers of sanitary products as well as the British parliament. Six weeks later, all the major British manufacturers (except the tampon makers) agreed to end their practices of chlorine gas bleaching.

The authors of Whitewash are hoping the accomplish the same thing in North America. They call upon the power of the pocketbook, with claims that women do most of the world's shopping (over 80%), and of course buy most of the sanitary products. It is a powerful book, quite convincing in its cause, and, unlike many critical works, it offers good alternatives and solutions.

What's So Unsanitary About Sanitary Products?

Disposable menstrual pads, tampons, disposable diapers, and incontinence pads are made from wood pulp, mostly kraft pulp. Kraft pulp is soaked in a caustic chemical bath, then bleached with chlorine gas. Chlorine bleaching creates small amounts of organochlorines. Sanitary products cannot be rinsed after being chemically treated, since it would decrease their absorbency; and trace amounts of organochlorines are found in sanitary products.

There are thousands of organochlorines (such as DDT, PCBs, CFCs, and dioxin) most of which are highly toxic. Since these chemicals do not naturally occur in our environment, they do not decompose easily. The bodies of humans and other animals are not equipped to handle these chemicals, which accumulate in fatty tissues. This "bioaccumulation" means that organochlorines that have been found in lakes work their way up the food chain to humans who eat the fish that live in those lakes.

Wood pulp mills create a large amount of other pollutants as well. But these aren't the only sources of potentially harmful materials in our menstrual products. The authors of Whitewash discovered a patent which listed the following: "phenols, mercuric chloride and sulfurous acid as well as various bactericides and fungicides...have been added to the absorbent layers of sanitary hygiene products."

The ingredients of menstrual products do not, by law, have to be listed, unlike the ingredients of shampoo or nail polish. Tambrands, makers of the popular Tampax tampons, do list some ingredients on their packages: cotton cord, cotton fiber, rayon, and fragrance. Lillian Yin, a representative of the Food and Drug Administration, defends this incomplete listing by saying "Common sense tells women that they're not listing all of the ingredients." However, common sense tells me that if ingredients are listed, then those are all the ingredients.

This is the same administration, by the way, that forbid the sale of sea sponges as tampons not because of the sand, fungi, bacteria and chemicals found in them, but because they were worried that women might rinse their sponges in public sinks!

There are many other fun facts to be found in Whitewash. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, some of the larger bookstores in the area may be able to order the book from Canada; also Natural Concepts (483-7186) can help you find a copy if you're interested. If you are interested in the Women's Environmental Network, a local chapter has been formed here in Seattle (726-0300).

The Power of the Pad

Although chlorine-based bleaching is also used in other areas of paper manufacture, the fact that these products are placed against (or inside) the genitals of women and babies places importance upon these particular products.

There is also the issue of disposing of these products - one woman throws away about 10,000 pads or tampons in her lifetime. The plastic tampon applicators, which often get flushed down toilets, are virtually indestructable. Many of these "pink torpedoes" end up floating in the oceans, landing on distant beaches and killing thousands of seabirds and other marine animals.

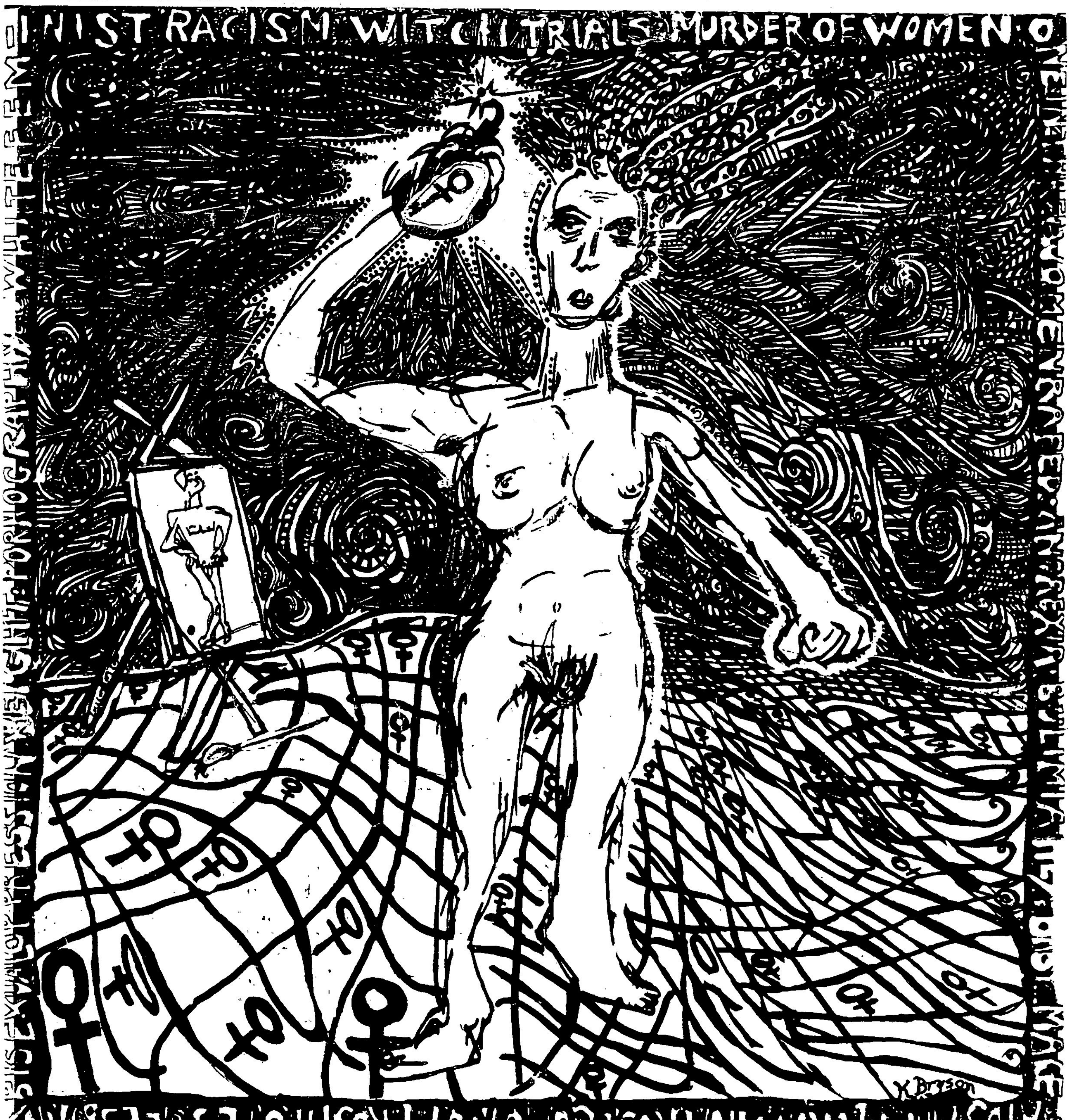
Continued on page 14

UNSANITARY PRODUCTS

Continued from page 13

Every day we make choices which affect the health of our bodies and our environment. Because of the power of business and advertising, our choices are not always fully informed. So it is our responsibility to get other information out there.

Realizing how many years I have been using "sanitary" pads without even wondering what was in them shocks me. Only in a society that values profit over health and environment, and where a woman's natural bodily functions are taboo, could such ignorance be tolerated. It's time we started talking!▼


INIST RACISM WITCH TRIALS MURDER OF WOMEN · O
ONE IN [illegible] WOMEN RAPED · ANOREXIA · BULIMIA · [illegible] · WAGE
AIDS SAINT/WOMAN · PROSECUTION OF PROSTITUTES · LESBIAN
SEXUAL OPPRESSION · WEIGHT · PORNOGRAPHY · WHITE FEM
K Bryson

TRANSGENDERED AND BI

Continued from page 12

less developed genitals shortly after birth and sometimes do hormone treatment. Doctors and family don't always make the correct decision about which gender the person really is.

Transvestitism: Since our society sees little or nothing wrong with women dressing as men and even insists on its fashionability at times, transvestism is generally not a problem for women. Male transvestites differ from transgendered people in that they desire to dress and occasionally act as women, but do not consider themselves women or even want to be. Transvestites never seek sexual reassignment surgery. Clinicians recognize transvestism as a tranquilizer against the rigors of manliness. Many societies, including our own, have ritualized transvestism in religious ceremonies or in secular party times, like Halloween or Mardi Gras. Support groups and private events exist in most major cities in the U.S. for men who want to dress as women but feel unsafe in doing so publicly.

Transgenderal: A term that seems to includes transvestites and transsexuals, and is often used for people who live cross-gender without therapy or surgery; it is used as far as I can tell only by social workers and clinicians; almost no one in the community uses or even likes the term.

Passing Women: A term currently popular for female to male transsexuals who live entirely in a male role but consider themselves women. Leslie Feinberg, author and political activist, tours with a good slide show with this title.

Drag Queens: This is the term usually used to refer to gay men who dress in a feminine manner, often exaggeratedly so. If they do it on stage as well, they also are impersonators.

Female/Male Impersonators: Though once used as a term to refer to anyone wearing the opposite gender's clothing, it is now used to refer to those who do so for theatrical reasons. Off stage, they seldom would even think of wearing such clothing. Bob Hope, Jack Lemmon, Dustin Hoffman, Julie Andrews and many other well-known actors and actresses have done impersonations.

Ingersoll Gender Center: A good place for people who need to sort out where they are in their gender orientation. The phoneline (329-6651) is answered live on Wednesdays, 4-7 p.m. Support groups and referrals are available for everyone dealing with gender issues.

Final Note: People are wonderfully complex, and at different times and in different situations any individual may be doing something that any or all of the above language categories might fit. Words are temporary descriptors, not permanent labels.▼

Denise is a member of the facilitators' collective of SBWN.

Poetry

1970 —
Come to think of it—
How did I come so easily
to the decision to abort her?
Sure, I was young and naive
and not prepared to raise
a child..

But still—
There was no debate,
no angst,
no regret;
Just do what must be done.

Too easy.
Think of the circumstances
of life then
That made this choice
the only choice,
And any alternatives
negligable.

Peggy

Calendar

For location, confirmation, or moare information call the appropriate message machine and someone will get back to you (with discretion, if necessary). For SBWN events call (206) 783-7987. For all other events (BiNet, Seattle Bisexul Men's Union, etc.) call (206) 720-4506. SBWN events are open to all women, SBMU events are open to all men.

Saturday October 2 Second Bi 2nd social gathering, a dinner party at Delvina's.*

Saturday October 2 Big Bi Fun, 9pm at Bulldog News in the Broadway market.*

Tuesday October 5 Blue Stockings feminist reading group meeting at Lizabeth's, 7pm.

Wednesday October 6 BiNet meeting, 7pm at Darin's.*

Thursday October 7 SBWN Facilitator's collective meeting at Theressia's.

Saturday October 9 National Coming Out Day conference in Tacoma. Call BiNet for details.*

Sunday October 10 SBWN meeting, 6pm. Topic: Safer Sex

Sunday October 10 SBMU meeting, 7pm, Seattle Central Community College portable B108. Topic: Fat phobia and Fat oppression.

Monday October 11 National Coming Out Day!! What are you going to wear? Get your Bi T-shirts (see p.4) as well as pins and pendants at meetings. Increase visiBIlity while supporting local bi organizations! Call BiNet line for details on NCOD events.*

Monday October 11 National Coming Out Day all women's movie fest at Theressias' at 7pm, featuring queer videos, bring non-messy munchies.

Thursday October 14 National Women's Strike Day (see information on page 4)

Saturday October 16 Big Bi Fun, 9pm at Bulldog news in the Broadway market.*

Monday October 18 SBWN Newcomer's group meeting, 7:15pm

Sunday October 24 SBWN Meeting, 6pm. Election night. also, a discussion of our policy regarding Transgendered women as a part of our group.

Sunday October 24 SBMU social: U District movie night. Meet at 6pm at the Black Cat Cafe, 4110 Roosevelt Way NE, have a bite, pick and see some movies, and then hang out.

Saturday October 30 Big Bi Fun, 9pm, bulldog news in the Broadway market.*

Monday November 1 SBWN newcomer's meeting, 7:15pm. Topic: biphobia.

Tuesday November 2 Election day, remember to vote!* Also, Second Bi 2nd Election day/post-Halloween party, dress as your favorite political figure and take a bisexual bus ride to a party in Tacoma!*

Sunday November 7 SBWN meeting, 6pm. An open rap session.

Tuesday November 9 Blue Stockings feminist reading group meeting at Sascha's, 7pm

Wednesday November 10 BiNet meeting, 7pm at Denise's*

Saturday November 13 Big Bi Fun, 9pm, at Bulldog News in the Broadway market.*

Sunday November 14 SBMU meeting, 7pm, SCCC portable B108. Topic: Oral sex.

Monday November 15 SBWN Newcomer's meeting, 7:15pm

Sunday November 21 SBWN meeting, 6pm, Topic: Masturbation.

Sunday November 28 Harvest Potluck, location TBA.*

Monday November 29 SBWN Newcomer's meeting, 7:15pm

Sunday December 5 SBWN meeting, 6pm

*denotes multi-gender events

Please note that BiNet events (except for Big Bi Fun club) are smoke and alcohol-free and accessible to all ages unless otherwise specified.

Blue Stockings is an SBWN-affiliated feminist women's reading group that meets on the first Tuesday of the month, unless that day falls on the 2nd, in which case the meeting will be on the second Tuesday. We will try to alternate between academic writings and more accessible writings. We welcome all ideas.

Schedule: Tuesday October 5, 7pm at Lizabeth's, a discussion of Michelle Cliff's *Abeng*. Tuesday November 9, 7pm at Sascha's, a discussion of Andrea Dworkin's *Woman Hating*. Tuesday December 7, 7pm at Suzanne's, a discussion of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Call SBWN for more informaiton.

The Polyfidelity Potluck on September 11 was a resounding success! Planning for the next one is in the works, call the BiNet line for more information.

The Big Bi Fun Club meets every other Saturday night at 9pm at Bulldog News in the Broadway Market. All bi-friendly people are welcome to join us as we gather and then decide together what activity we are going to go out and do. Last weekend we had a blast doing Bi Karaoke at the Plaza Mexico; Peter sang 'Material Girl', Brittany sang a Led Zeppelin song, several of us sang 'Both Sides Now' and 'Bye Bye (Bi Bi) Love', women danced with women and men with men. A great way to meet people and have fun as you promote bi visiblity.

SORRY ABOUT THE CROOKED PAGE NUMBERS – WE CAN'T EVEN LAY OUT STRAIGHT!